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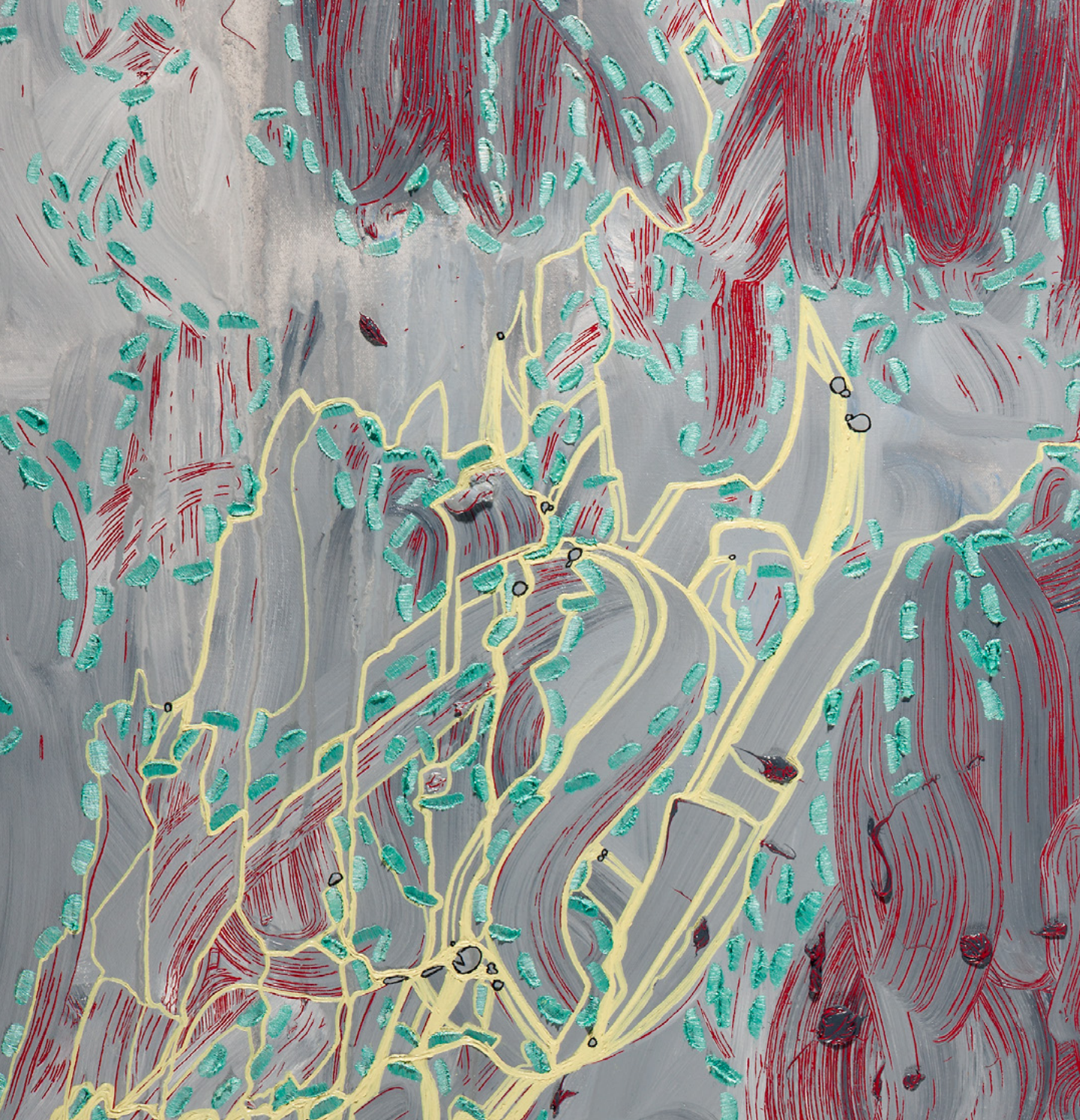
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PLAYTIME



Katie Pratt, *Fastford* (detail), 2017. Oil on canvas, 85 x 60cm

EXHIBITING ARTISTS

SHARON
HALL

ROBERT
HOLYHEAD

GINA
MEDCALF

LAURENCE
NOGA

KATIE
PRATT

DAVID
RHODES

PLAYTIME

CURATED BY SHARON HALL

ACCOMPANYING ESSAY BY KAMINI VELLODI

6 TO 28 SEPTEMBER 2019 | ARTISTS' TALK 28 SEPTEMBER AT 4PM

ARTHOUSE1.



PLAYTIME AND PAINTING

The works gathered in this exhibition present many ways in which painting can express, expose and invoke time. Together, they invite reflection on the complexities of painting's relation to time, and the often-debated tension between the immutability of painting and its capture of transience.

Constructed from found and discarded materials, Laurence Noga's assembled blocks produce conjunctions of verticals, horizontals and diagonals. Monochrome sections are interrupted by strips of colour and fragments of geometric patterns, or bleed into each other roughly. The effect is of a stop-and-start of time, where the material passage of paint is disrupted by the discontinuity of formal boundaries. *Deep Blue Filtered Silver* carries our gaze sidelong, interrupting its motion with sharp divisions between coloured and striped sections. The discs of *Soft Orange* conjure the rotating mechanism of machine parts, now arrested. A sense of time stood still is offset by the duration embodied in the visible traces of brushstrokes. The lulling waves of colour in Gina Medcalf's paintings, forged through the regular sweepings of a broom, conjure a more expansive feeling of time.

Robert Holyhead, *Untitled (Oxide Red)* (detail), 2012. Oil on canvas. 38.1 x 45.7cm

Prismatic refractions of umbers, cyans, siennas and cadmiums undulate on liquid surfaces, evoking sensations of rippling water. Patches of dancing whites conjure reflected light. Here, time is made to retard through an immersive action of colour and light, ebbing and flowing, again and again. Robert Holyhead's paintings present a tenser dynamic. Jagged zones of white ground, produced by erasure, act as stopping-points to the flow of time embodied by gestural brushstrokes of translucent greys and carmines. Here, erasure counters time's onward passage, splicing through the apparently seamless duration of paint's material fluidity. The cellular time of organic processes – growth, evolution, dispersion and decay – characterise the works of Katie Pratt. The lime green splodge of *Humhug* anchors minute, almost viral growths. In other paintings, a labyrinthine network of roots or tendrils proliferate, displacing any sense of linear succession with simultaneous unfurlings. Here, chance – the works commence with thrown and splashed paint – functions as an original discontinuity, severing painting from its imbrication within the continuity of lived time. In contrast, it is inorganic regularity that seems to characterise Sharon Hall's paintings. Held by geometrical armatures, intense colour bands divide surfaces into sections. Their pulsating planes evoke minute, barely perceptible rhythms that nuance the firm and measurable time invoked by the pictorial architectonic. Often made in a single day, David Rhodes' paintings seem to submit the act of their genesis to the parameters of clock time and the measure it permits. However, the abstracted patternings of their surfaces – variations of repeated arcs and strokes – complicate such submission by introducing temporal variations that confound straightforward measure.

Binding together these rich variations in painting's implication of time is the problem of the historical category of abstraction, to which all of these works evidently bear a relation. As such, any reflection on the singular implications of time by these singular paintings might be conjoined with a critical attention to the question of their debt to the histories and legacies of modernist abstractions, and the plural strategies by which they appear as historical objects in historical time. At this point, we are brought to the question of a mediation between these two levels of the particular and the general.

Indeed, the question of the time of painting is most often posed at one or other of these registers: either at the level of individual paintings, or at the level of the category of painting. On the one hand, we find descriptive attention – of the kind I have just presented – to the ways in which paintings embody, express, invoke, expose or represent time through tropes of pictorial composition, the act of painting, and its experiential impact. Here, writers might reflect on the strategies and procedures assumed by different painters – such as chance, seriality, erasure, repetition and gestural mark-making – as means of effecting different qualities of time, such as passage, hiatus, and immutability. On the other hand, we find an engagement with painting as a category, notably the generic category of the medium, bound by historical framings such as periodisation or stylistic movements, or ontological classifications such as 'abstraction'. In this case, we might encounter reflections on how particular groupings of painting implicate time differently: for example, the sense of timelessness embodied by Orthodox Christian icons, the quality of the instant putatively epitomised by post-war modernist painting (its countering of duration with the instantaneity of presence), or the question of cyclicity or anachronism provoked by the various returns and replays staged by painting since the 1980s.

Both approaches to the question of painting's time are in themselves inadequate. In the first instance, we remain at the positivist level of description; a somewhat arbitrary approach since they are as many differing relations to time as there are ways of painting. In the second instance, there is a retreat to the abstractions of categories that subsume the particular to the general. Is there not a medium between these two alternatives, a way of thinking time that reconciles the contingencies of its actual instantiations with broad conceptual categories? For surely this is what is most compelling about the question of painting's time: the mediation of its particular implications of time with the reflection this invites on the nature of painting.

At first, the concept of *playtime* might not appear as a promising candidate for such mediation. For it seems to invoke the designated time of unbridled spontaneity, lack of constraint, perhaps even caprice; a time when order

no longer rules. But on closer examination, the concept of play and its temporality offers more complex registers of intelligibility.

Some of these were memorably articulated by the great Dutch cultural historian Johannes Huizinga in his 1938 *Homo Ludens: A study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Huizinga argued that play – in his view, the basis of all culture – is excess to prescribed function and need, and excess to any particular epoch. Marked above all by the quality of freedom, play lies outside the antithesis of moral qualities such as good and evil, truth and falsity. It has no direct opposite, and in this singular nature it operates as an interlude in the time of lived experience, bearing its own duration. Play conjures ‘temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart.’¹ Within the continuity of lived time, play marks a fundamental discontinuity. ‘Play begins, and then at a certain moment it is ‘over’. It plays itself to an end.’ Here, the sense is of a circumscription of time within time’s passage. This circumscribed playtime marks change and movement: ‘Whilst [play] is in progress all is in movement, change, alteration, succession, association, separation.’²

But play is not just a moment that erupts into lived experience only to disappear again. It is more than simple distraction, caprice or frivolity. Rather, its ‘act apart’ bears meaningful effects that endure. Play creates order, and art is a means by which this order is attained and temporary effects are rendered permanent. Art is inherently playful (a link affirmed by the etymology of ‘Illusion’, which derives from *illudere*, meaning “in-play,”: from *in-* “at, upon” + *ludere* “to play”).

In this theorisation of play as a constructive and transformative principle of freedom, we are reminded of the famous, post-Kantian conception of play by Fredrich Schiller in his 1794 *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. The play impulse is theorised as the uniting of the two human impulses of the sensuous and the formal – a

unification that is inherently linked to the aesthetic. The passive and receptive element of pure matter or ‘life’, sensuousness is immediately present to the senses, desires change, and caught up in the flow of time. The productive element of human activity, the impulse to form desires permanence, belongs to thinking, and exists outside the flow of time. In uniting these impulses, play conjoins abstraction with impression, form with matter, thinking with feeling, the historical with the transhistorical. Play rescues matter from caprice, and form from constraint. It tempers both the frivolity of spontaneity, and the sterility of rules. Schiller understands the time of play as a conjunction of the succession of instances that constitute the register of the sensual with the timelessness of form. Play suppresses time in time, conciliating ‘transition or becoming with absolute being, change with identity’.³

The notion of *playtime* then, extracted from these two seminal theorists of play and taken beyond their original semantic contexts, offers a compelling frame for addressing the temporality of painting as a quality reducible neither to the singular ways in which painting embodies or implicates time, nor to abstract categories of time. It permits a way of addressing the apparent contradictions of painting’s relation to time: its synthesis of the transient with the immutable, of material action in time with form that survives time’s passing.

In their differing ways, the paintings in this exhibition all enact this dialectic. We might note, for instance, the combination of the transitional sensations or intensities of colour with the temperance of compositional rationale, the collision of the formal and the sensual as blocks (Noga), waves (Metcalf), bands (Hall), patches (Rhodes), splashes (Pratt) and blanks (Holyhead). *Playtime* offers itself as a new category for encapsulating the sense of time constructed by the meeting of timeless monochromes and interrupted coloured-matter (Noga), the measurable regularity of sweeping gestures and the speeds and slownesses of their material effects (Metcalf); the timeless zones of un-painted forms and the durational time of painterly brushstrokes (Holyhead); the eruption of discontinuous zones and the evolving growth of matter (Pratt); the formal armatures of geometrical architectonic and the



Gina Medcalf, *Room 66/3L (detail)*, 2018. Acrylic on canvas. 132 x 114 cm

pulsations of coloured planes (Hall); the regulation of clock time with the anachronic marks of the brush (Rhodes).

On a register beyond the historical category of 'abstraction', and the bounds of genre, painting emerges here neither as indebted and contingent upon material processes in time, nor aligned with a pure formalism that ostensibly stands apart from time's passage, nor subsumed to the determinations of historical time. In its play, painting combats the passing of time whilst making time sensible.

Essay by Kamini Vellodi, 2019

Vellodi is Lecturer in Contemporary Art Theory and Practice at the University of Edinburgh. She is the author of *Tintoretto's Difference. Deleuze, Diagrammatics and Art History* (Bloomsbury, 2018), and series editor of *Refractions. At the Borders of Art History and Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press.

1 Johannes Huizinga, *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, 10

2 Ibid, 9

3 Friedrich Schiller, *On the aesthetic education of man: In a series of letters* [by] Friedrich Schiller; edited and translated [from the German] with an introduction, commentary and glossary of terms by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967, Letter



Two Trios plus One, 2019. Oil on linen. 39.8 x 49.4 cm



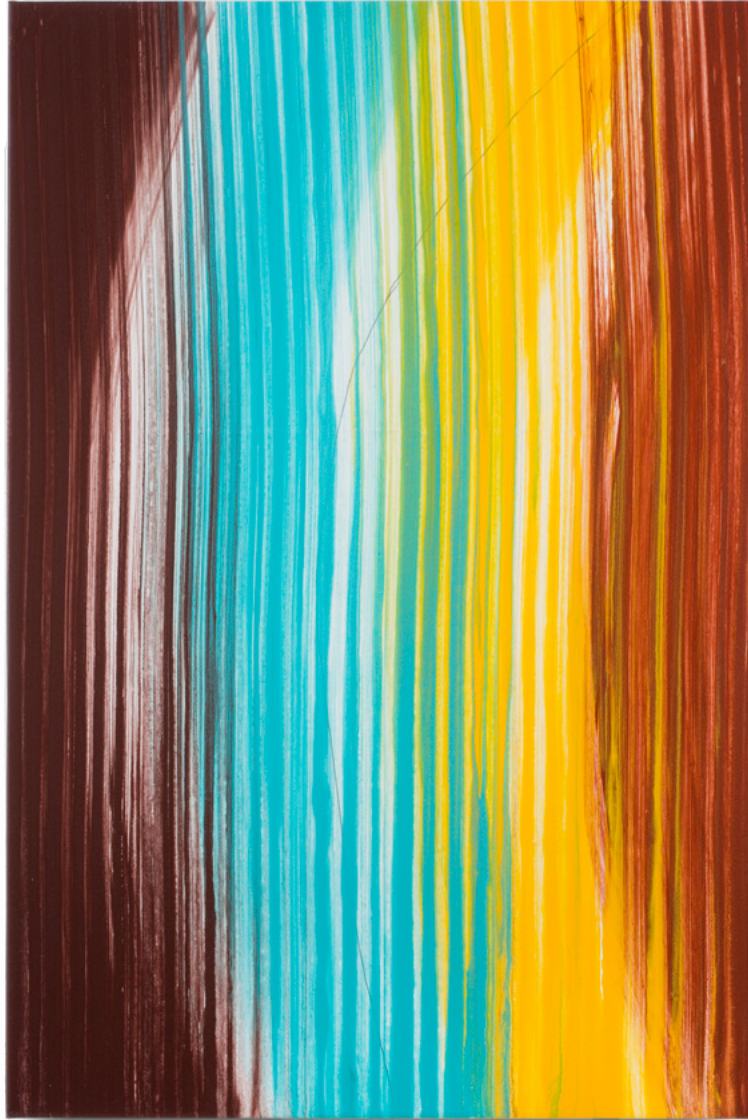
Accentata (Blu), 2019. Oil on canvas. 40.5 x 50.8 cm



Untitled (Forms), 2017. Oil on canvas. 66 x 38.1cm



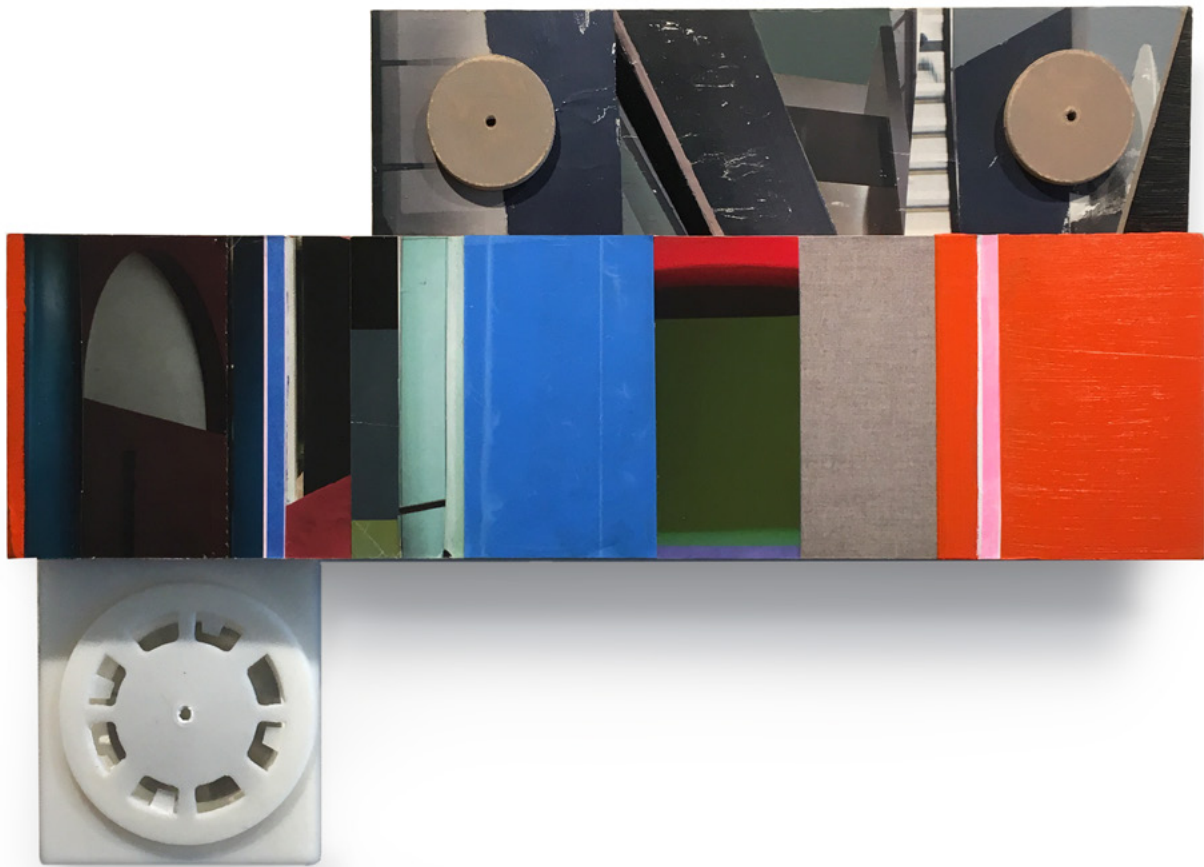
Untitled (Slant), 2015. Oil on canvas. 60.9 x 33cm



Oplontis Room 66/2, 2018. Acrylic on canvas. 68.6 x 45.8 cm



Oplontis Room 66/4, 2018. Acrylic on canvas. 68.6 x 45.8 cm



Soft Orange Floating Blue, 2017. Collage—acrylic, aluminum, wood, plastic. 34 x 49 cm



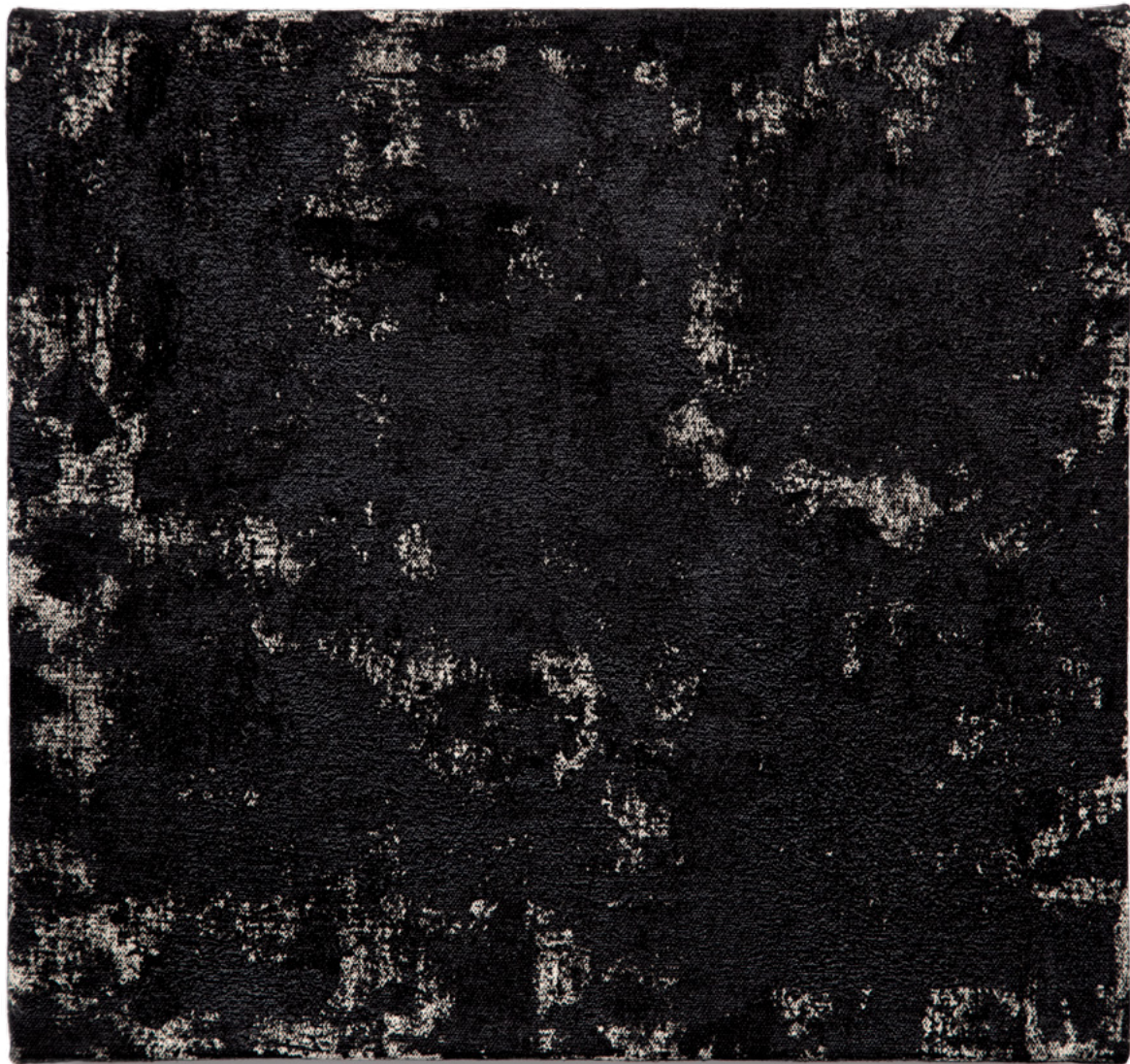
Deep Blue Filtered Silver, 2017. Collage—acrylic, perspex on wood. 13 x 25 cm



Humhug, 2018. Oil & gesso on canvas. 41 x 30cm



Waradel, 2018. Oil on canvas. 120 x 90cm



Untitled May 12, 2019. Acrylic on canvas. 38.1 x 35.56 cm



Untitled May 13, 2019. Acrylic on canvas. 38.1 x 35.56 cm



Laurence Noga, *Deep Yellow Filtered Pink* (detail), 2017. Collage — acrylic on perspex, 13 x 25 cm

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SHARON HALL studied fine art painting at Coventry (Lanchester) Polytechnic (1979) and the Slade School of Fine Art (1981).

On leaving the Slade, Hall was the recipient of a French Government Scholarship and she lived in Paris for three months where she undertook research on the French Impressionists and painted in a studio in the city.

In 1990 she was awarded a Rome Scholarship to the British School at Rome. Italian painting and its history continue to be a major influence in her work. Other awards include Arts Council of Great Britain, 2014 (for *COLOUR/Boundary* exhibition) and *The Picker Lectureship* at Kingston University in 1988.

Recent group exhibitions include *Fully Awake* at the *Freelands Foundation*, London, 2019, *Clyde Hopkins and friends*; Linden Hall Studio, Deal, 2019, *Panel Painting 3 (Diptych)*; Emma Hill Gallery London, 2019, the Royal Academy of Arts *Summer Exhibition*; 2018, *entr'acte : intermission*, Abstract-Project; Paris, 2017; *Imperfect Reverse*; with Saturation Point Projects at Camberwell Space Projects, London 2016, (touring to Anglia Ruskin Gallery, Cambridge), *Summer Mix*; Turps Gallery, London 2016, *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles*; Paris, 2016 and *COLOUR/Boundary*; Gallery North, Newcastle, 2014. Recent one person shows include *Colour in Place*; at the Palazzo del Podestà Museum, Pescia, Italy, 2013 and *Sharon Hall Paintings*; Three Works, Scarborough in 2019.

Hall has taught at many UK art schools and is formerly Head of Painting at Manchester School of Art.

Sharon Hall was born in Darlington, UK in 1954. She lives and works in London and Italy.

www.sharonhall.co.uk

ROBERT HOLYHEAD studied at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University (BA Hons, Fine Art, Painting 1993-96) and at the Chelsea School of Art and Design (MA Fine Art, Painting, 1996-97).

In 2005 he was a recipient of the five-year ACME Fire Station live/work residency. In 2009/2010 he was commissioned by the Government Art Collection to produce two site-specific works for the New British Embassy and the UK Permanent

Representation to the European Union in Brussels. In 2018 he undertook a residency at SoART in Austria, was shortlisted for the UK Arts Foundation Award 20th Anniversary and contributed an essay for Tate Publishing for Patrick Heron at Tate St Ives. He is represented by Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin, Paris and London. Recent projects include *Painting Project: Out Looking Inwards* in Oslo, Norway — a curated research residency in collaboration with PRAKSIS and LNM (Oslo) and *Al Dente*, an online painting project hosted by Skelf (curated by John Walter).

The Arts Council Collection, the Government Art Collection, the Tate collection and Centre Pompidou have acquired his work.

Solo exhibitions include: Galerie Max Hetzler, Paris (2016); PARTS Project, The Hague, (2016); Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin (2014); PEER, London (2012); Karsten Schubert, London (2009, 2010 and 2012).

Selected group exhibitions include: *Revealed*; Government Art Collection, Ulster Museum, Belfast, (2013); *The Space Between*; Tate Britain, London (2012/13)

Robert Holyhead was born in Trowbridge, UK in 1974

He lives and works in London.

www.robertholyhead.com

GINA MEDCALF received a degree in Fine Art from the Central School of Art and Design, London (BA Hons, Fine Art, Painting 1966-69). In 2015 she was the recipient of an Abbey Fellowship in Painting at the British School at Rome and in 2008 and 2017 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Awards. Recent projects include an appearance to speak on *Abstractions' Audience*; at the Hay on Wye Festival (2019); an exhibition at the Smith Jariwala Gallery, London (2018). Group exhibitions include *Passionate Process*; APT Gallery, London (2017); *Ex Roma*; APT Gallery, London (2017); *March Mostra*; British School at Rome (2015).

Gina Medcalf was born in Llandudno, North Wales in 1941. She lives and works in London, UK.

www.ginamedcalf.com

LAURENCE NOGA (b. London 1961), Laurence Noga graduated from Wimbledon School of Art in 1984 and completed postgraduate studies at Byam Shaw (Central St Martins) University of the Arts, London in 1991, receiving the Post Graduate Award

of Merit for Fine Art. He is an artist and curator and writes for Saturation Point Projects.

Noga's recent exhibitions include; *Open Construction* (2019) with Saturation Point Projects at Eastbury Manor London and he has taken part in the Lyle Hearth Gallery supporting the homeless (2019); *Momentum*, Angus Hughes Gallery London (2018); John Moores Painting Prize (2018) Walker Art Gallery Liverpool; *Open System C & C* Gallery London (2018) (solo show).

Other group exhibitions include *entr'acte : intermission* (2017), Abstract-Project Paris; *Make_shift* (2017) Collyer Bristow Gallery London; Sluice Art Fair (2017); *Merge Visible* (2017) curated by Charley Peters Contemporary British Painting The Crypt London; *Undead Painters* (2017) Saturation Point Project Space London; *Extended Process* (2016) Saturation Point Project Space London; *Summer Mix* (2016) Turps Gallery, Turps Space London; *From Centre* (2015) Slate Projects and Saturation Point Projects; *Colour and Otherness* (2014) Grace Teshima Gallery Paris; *GB/Switch/NL* (2014) APT at Pulchri Studio Den Haag The Netherlands.

Selected curatorial projects include; *Imperfect Reverse* (2016) with Saturation Point Projects at Camberwell Project Space, touring to Anglia Ruskin University; *Borderline (beyond a rational aesthetic)* (2015) C&C Gallery London; *Intuition anti Intuition* (2012) Lion and Lamb Gallery London.

He currently lectures at the University of the Arts, London.

www.laurencenoga.co.uk

KATIE PRATT studied at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton (BA Hons Fine Art, Painting 1989-92) and at the Royal College of Art (MA Painting 1996-98). In 2001 she was recipient of the Jerwood Painting Prize.

In 2018 she undertook a residency at City & Guilds of London Art School, co-edited and contributed an essay text for Everyday Press *The Order of Things* and Turps Magazine published her interview with Suzan Frecon as the main feature in #19. In 2019 she was announced as winner of the Thermae Bath Spa Commission. She is represented by Galerie Peter Zimmermann. Current projects include a collaboration with the National Cybersecurity Centre, GCHQ; and *Location / Dislocation: Between Remembering & Forgetting*; curated by Vineta Kaulaca, touring from the Mark Rothko Art Centre, Daugavpils to Art Station, Dubulti, Latvia through 2019 to 2020. She co-curated *The Order of Things* with Andrew Bick and Jonathan Parsons at the Wilson

Gallery, Cheltenham in 2017. Other selected group exhibitions include *Patrick Heron, Jonathan Lasker, Katie Pratt at John Hansard* Gallery Southampton in 2006; *Cold Climates* 2006 curated by Peter Lamb at the Living Art Museum, Reykjavik and *Landscape Confection* curated by Helen Molesworth at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus Ohio, touring to Contemporary Arts Museum; Houston Texas and Orange County Museum of Art; Long Beach California 2005/06. The Jerwood Collection and the Royal College of Art have acquired her work. Solo exhibitions include: Galerie Peter Zimmermann (2012 & 2016); Fine Art Society, London (2011-12) Kontainer Gallery Los Angeles (2003, 2005 & 2008); Forum d'Art Contemporain, Sière (2003); Houldsworth Fine Art London (2002/03 & 2001) and *Artist For The Day*, selected by Sacha Craddock, Flowers East in 1995.

Katie Pratt was born in Epsom, United Kingdom in 1969. She lives and works in London.

www.katiepratt.net

DAVID RHODES was born in Manchester, UK (1955). After living in London, Berlin, and Barcelona he now lives in New York. He has exhibited internationally including one person exhibitions at Anthony Wilkinson Gallery (London), Centrum (Berlin), Palacete Viscondes de Balsemao (Porto), Galerie Katharina Krohn (Basel), Hionas Gallery (New York) and most recently, Tat Art (Barcelona) in 2017. He is currently represented by Galeria Carles Taché (Barcelona). His work has been included in numerous two person and group exhibitions, most recently in *Gary Stephan / David Rhodes* at Hionas Gallery (New York), Notebook at 56 Henry (New York) and *Downtown* curated by Alex Katz at Peter Freeman Inc. (New York) all 2019. He has curated exhibitions in London, Berlin and New York, including *Split* at Zürcher Gallery (New York) in 2017. In August 2019 he produced an edition during the invitational residency at Aurobora Press (Idaho). His work is in the permanent collections of The Museum of Fine Arts (Houston), The Huntington Museum (Los Angeles), The Victoria & Albert Museum (London), CCA Andratx (Mallorca) and The Bohuslans Museum (Uddevalla).

As a writer, he has contributed to *Artforum* (New York), *Art Critical* (New York), *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Editor at Large* (New York), *Von Bartha Quarterly* (Basel) and *The Journal of Contemporary Painting* (London). He has written catalogue texts for Museum Ludwig (Cologne), Michael Werner Gallery (Berlin/New York), and Galerie Vidal Saint-Phalle (Paris) amongst others. In July 2019 Lund Humphries, London published his monograph on Bernard Frize.

www.davidrhodes.net

David Rhodes, *Untitled* (detail), 2019, Acrylic on paper

